DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 363 638 TM 020 658

AUTHOR Bauer, Norman J.
TITLE Instructional Designs, Portfolios and the Pursuit of Authentic Assessment.
PUB DATE Apr 93
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the Spring Conference of the New York State Association of Teacher Educators (Syracuse, NY, April 29-30, 1993).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Classroom Environment; Discipline; *Educational Assessment; Elementary Secondary Education; *Evaluation Methods; *Instructional Design; Intellectual Disciplines; Material Development; Naturalistic Observation; *Portfolios (Background Materials); Student Evaluation; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS *Authentic Assessment; *Performance Based Evaluation

ABSTRACT

Educational assessment is discussed, describing three images of instructional design that can be used to construct classroom learning environments, and focusing on the nature and uses of portfolios and authentic assessment. The following three designs for schooling are considered: (1) discipline-centered schooling, the most familiar vision of teaching; (2) empirical-naturalistic schooling, in which students assist students in shaping their uncertainties into problems that can lead to significant and integrated learning; and (3) Great Works schooling, in which students develop interpretive powers through shared inquiry into works of literature or art. Portfolio construction and assessment are reviewed and discussed in the context of authentic assessment. A continuum of authentic assessment is proposed, and problems in its development are explored. Portfolio assessment can be a means toward a more authentic evaluation of learning. Use of portfolios can make teaching a far more participative process. (Contains 10 references.) (SLD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 363 638

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGNS, PORTFOLIOS AND THE PURSUIT OF AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Presented

by

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
NORMAN J. BAUER
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Norman J. Bauer, Ed.D.
Professor of Social Foundations of Education
School of Education
State University of New York
Geneseo, New York 14454

at the

SPRING CONFERENCE

of the

NEW YORK STATE ASSOCIATION OF TEACHER EDUCATORS

Ramada Inn
1305 Buckley Road
Syracuse, New York 13212

April 29-30, 1993

TM020658

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGNS, PORTFOLIOS AND THE PURSUIT OF AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT

Norman J. Bauer, Ed.D.

April 30, 1993

Introduction:

One of the most significant continuing challenges confronting classroom instructional theory is that which pertains to the assessment of how (process) and what (content) students have learned from their school experiences. Current assessment practices tend to adhere to a narrow, confining perspective of learners, a predetermined, presentative vision of teaching and learning, an object-oriented view toward subject-matter and the curriculum.

While necessary and useful for some purposes related to teaching essential facts and conventions, core values and basic skills, such a confining perspective of learners, and the attendant assessment practices which it usually entails, by no means represents the range of evaluative practices available to teachers and learners who wish to acquire a clear, increasingly

authentic, understanding of what has been learned.

One means of achieving such authenticity is with the use of 'portfolios.' This tool has brought rare opportunities into the classroom. It can, particularly if employed in conjunction with clearly understood instructional designs which guide the teaching and learning that is taking place, provide a teacher with an opportunity to acquire a more authentic picture of the knowledge, interpretative understandings, applicative, analytical and synthetic capacities which a student has developed over time.

Purposes:

The purposes of this brief paper are to (a) describe three images of instructional designs which can be used to construct classroom learning environments; (b) review the nature of portfolios and the assumptions upon which they are grounded; (c) probe the meaning of 'authenticity', and the degree of authentic assessment which is likely to permeate learning environments which are created and guided by each of these designs; (d) consider the way in which portfolios can be used to pursue the authentic assessment of learners when guided by

these designs; and (e) identify and briefly speculate about some of the problems that can arise when teachers who are guided by each of these instructional designs use portfolio assessment to evaluate their students

Assumptions:

Three assumptions are accepted by the writer and have guided his thinking as this paper was developed. (1) The three images of instructional design which are revealed in this paper clearly represent different ends and means which can guide teaching and learning; (2) These designs reveal and represent the continuum of instructional activity in which teachers and students engage at various times. (3) The assessment of learning can become increasingly authentic when teaching and learning are guided by these designs.

Three Designs

The three designs for schooling which I would like to share with you are referred to as *Discipline-Centered Schooling (DCS), Empirical-naturalistic Schooling (ENS),* and *Great Works Schooling (GWS).* Each has been thoroughly examined elsewhere (Bauer, 1989).

The DCS design is the most familiar vision of teaching in our elementary and secondary schools. This perspective posits a teacher who has the authority and is expected to select and transmit prescribed, pre-determined subject matter to students. Students are perceived as passive receptacles to be filled with essential, standardized material. Occasionally the fact that students learn at differing rates is recognized, but the content to be covered remains the same for all. Regular feedback is acquired by the teacher via teacher made tests and standardized tests. Little if any credence is given to the interests, the uncertainties, the problems of the students; what is important is that they respond promptly to the directives and requirements imposed on them by the teacher, engage in independent, often competitive, activity, refrain from working with others, and remain on task at all times. Acquisition of clear, fixed and unequivocal images of knowledge, moral standards and skills is the goal of this vision of teaching.

ENS schooling starts from the assumption that children and youth are natural communal beings, incessantly curious about their world, naturally active, with interests and experiential

uncertainties which energize them, individually and collectively, at all times. The task of the teacher is to be a student of these uncertainties, assisting the students in shaping them into problems which can lead to significant, integrated learning. In the pursuit of such learning, students acquire the habits of mind (Sizer, 1992) which are associated with the reflective method of thought; for instance, habits of imagination, of analysis, of communication, of commitment, of courage, of risk-taking, of valuing, of respect for failure, of persistence. Subject matter which is studied is functionally related to the uncertainties, the problematics, confronted by the students. Learning is seen as functionally related to the ends, to the goals established both by individual students and by the community of students. The mental imagry of knowledge, value and skill which is acquired by students enables them to broaden the scope of their understandings and meanings. It is grounded in warranted evidence, but it is clearly not absolute, immutable truth. Nonterminating intellectual and moral growth is the end toward which this vision of classroom teaching is directed.

GWS pursues the goal of developing the interpretive powers of a group of students by first having them read, examine, or listen to the very best literature, art, drama, and music. Following this the group will be encouraged to explore alternative interpretations, problems of meaning, which they have not resolved for themselves via a process of investigation known as 'Shared Inquiry.'

In this design the teacher functions as a 'mentor'. It is important to understand the sense in which this term is used. The mentor is one who is responsible for developing and posing open-ended, interpretive questions for the group. These questions are ones which should enable the group to draw on the material they have read, observed, or listened to. The challenge of the mentor is to encourage each student participant to respond freely to the questions.

In many ways these three paradigms of classroom teaching are comparable to the three interconnected Columns of Learning and modes of teaching which have been created by Mortimer Adler. They correspond to three different ways in which the mind can be improved: (a) by the acquisition of organized

knowledge; (b) by the development of intellectual and moral skills; and (c) by the enlargement of understanding, insight, and aesthetic appreciation (Adler, 1982).

Didactic instruction via lectures, textbooks and other aids is the primary mode of knowledge acquisition in column one. Coaching and supervised practice is the dominant mode of pursuing the development of intellectual skills in column two. Column three stresses the maieutic (midwife) method, socratic questioning, and active participation in the discussion of books and other works of art, as well as involvement in artistic activities, e.g., music, drama, and the visual arts.

Because the three perspectives, DCS, ENS and GWS are clearly interconnected, it is not difficult to imagine them as different points along a continuum. At one end of this continuum one would have the authoritarian model, DCS; the center point might be ENS; the left hand end would be the position of GWS. More about the value for assessment of such a continuum later.

Portfolio

Let us now direct our attention toward the notion of 'portfolio'. By 'portfolio' I mean, in accord with (Sulzby,1990),

collections of the work of learners for the purpose of demonstrating their progress. Learners can be very important in this process as they keep track of what they are learning and mastering. It is important to note further, as (Ringler,1992) suggests, that data can be collected on an ongoing basis, and that instructional decisions can be seen as a collaboration between teachers and learners as they actively evaluate what is being learned. In this way, she points out "learners become self-critical, question their own learning, and set their own goals."

While there does not seem to be any single working definition of a portfolio, or of portfolio assessment, there do appear to be, nonetheless, a set of assumptions about the ends and means of most portfolio assessment.

Among the more significant of these assumptions are: (1) portfolios are systematic, purposeful, and meaningful collections of students' works in one or more subject areas; (2) students at any age or grade level can learn not only to select pieces to be placed into their portfolios but can also learn to establish criteria to guide their selections; (3) portfolio collections may include input by teachers, parents, peers, and

school administrators; (4) portfolios should reflect the actual day-to-day learning activities of students - they should showcase what students have learned, where they have been and what they have accomplished; (5) portfolios should be ongoing so that they show the students' efforts, progress, and achievements over a period of time; (6) portfolios can contain several compartments or subfolders - they can be boxes, drawers in a cabinet, scrapbooks, binders, file folders - they can consist of a variety of media - they can be multidimensional (De Fina, 1992).

Authentic

Let us briefly examine the notion of 'authentic'. By this term I mean the autonomous, independent action of human beings. The only value which applies categorically to all humans as humans is the actualization of the self as a free agent. This is what I mean by authenticity or authentic existence. An individual who is capable of choosing her own ends, and her own means to achieve these ends, is what I view as an authentic individual. In a very real sense such a person becomes the author of her own destiny. She acquires, in the process of

pursuing her destiny, a deep and lasting sense of autonomy and responsiblity for what she is in the process of becoming.

When applied to classroom teaching the notion of authenticity to which I subscribe can clearly be related to both the teacher and the learner. That is, one can have an 'authentic teacher', one who is fully conscious of the significance of the ends which are to be pursued during classroom teaching and the importance of creating opportunities for learning and mastery of material which enable the students in the room to pursue their own authentic development as well. "The authentic teacher," Kneller asserts, "spurns the cult of efficiency, the worship of numbers . . . the attempt to hold teachers and students 'accountable' to distant administrators through standardized tests" (Kneller, 35).

Clearly, for the teacher who possesses such an awareness and such values, there is a very real appreciation and acceptance of the spiritual significance of the 'I-Thou' relation which was articulated by Martin Buber in 1923. "According to Buber, spirit is not a substance or a being, but a relation, a between, which comes into being in the human act of

entering-in-relation, in meeting" (Kohanski, 1975).

Portfolios and Authentic Assessment

As we all are aware, 'portfolio' has been a standard part of the nomenclature of a number of different vocational and professional pursuits. Photographers, models, artists, architects, and stockbrokers, perhaps the most well-known users of this term, have employed this language in their discourse for many years. Use of such language in education, however, can trace itself back just a few years. Indeed, to most lay people, and even to many school people, this language is strange, foreign, perhaps another of the 'buzz' words, another piece of jargon, which seems to penetrate school work on occasion. Still, because of the strong influence which business has exerted on school people since the work of Frederick Taylor early in this century (Calahan,1962), it is not really very surprising that this dimension of the discourse of business has invaded school practice.

Anyone, for instance, who listens to the advice of a responsible stockbroker, will quickly come to realize the importance practically every broker places on the need and

value associated with both the identification of a clear set of financial goals and with the need to diversify one's equity holdings as one pursues such goals.

In classroom teaching one can perceive a similar need and value associated with both the identification of a clear set of instructional goals, and with the need to diversify one's approach to achieving information which will attest to how well a student or a group of students have been pursuing such goals. Portfolio assessment can become an useful strategy for managing the diversity of information about classroom learning which a teacher acquires.

Such an assessment strategy could be particularly useful if a teacher were to visualize in her mind a continuum along which each of the three instructional designs which we have briefly described in this paper could be positioned. Such a visualization would enable her clearly to recognize the different ends and means associated with each of the designs. And it would suggest that evaluating the quality of learning and mastery which occurs in a classroom can best be perceived by visualizing a *continuum of authentic assessment* .

Such a continuum would compel the teacher continuously to be alert to the sorts of feedback from her students which would be appropriate for each of the instructional designs. In the case of DCS, she would be particularly interested in any evidence which would reveal the basic knowledge and information which her students would have acquired. In the case of ENS, she would be concerned about any evidence which would reveal how well students have been able to achieve goals, to solve problems, which they would have posed for themselves. In the case of GWS, she would want to acquire insight into how well her students have learned to engage in shared inquiry discussions, in how well their ability to interpret challenging texts has developed, in how much their tendencies to return to the original text, without prompting, have been improved.

Her adoption and use of a *continuum of authentic assessment* would enhance the likelihood that, just as with a broker, the basic knowledges, skills and interpretive powers being acquired by her students in their pursuit of learning would be carefully documented and related to the instructional ends she has in mind.

Problems

Probably the single most significant problem confronting the adoption of a continuum of authentic assessment with the use of portfolios is the need to convince some teachers and administrators of the value such an approach has in revealing the spectrum of growth which a student is achieving. Some will probably claim that such an approach does not offer the sort of statistical basis for evaluation which is ordinarily associated with assessment. Still, if the principle of the continuum of authentic assessment is employed, there can be little doubt that portfolios would offer a comprehensive means for assessing the continuum of learning tasks and outcomes which students experience in their schooling.

Because of the problem some teachers, administrators and parents might have with such an approach to evaluation, a significant and extended program of education, entailing speakers with expertise, workshops, examination of significant literature and unfettered open discussion, should be provided for all who will in any way be affected by such a decision. Such a program of education should be guided by two goals: (1)

participants should acquire a thorough awareness and understanding of the three instructional designs to which reference has been made in this paper; and (2) they should engage in a thorough examination of the nature of portfolios and how they could be used, in conjunction with the instructional designs, to assess the work of students with an increasing measure of authenticity.

Identifying and agreeing to criteria which will be used in the selection of items to be included in a portfolio assessment, and constructing checklists for evaluating such items, can and will constitute a continuing challenge for a group of faculty.

The problem of maintining objectivity and integrity in assessing the contents of portfolios may constitute a problem. One way this might be addressed would be to have teams of teachers assess the contents of portfolios. With sufficient training, with a clear comprehension of the instructional designs and the nature of portfolios, and with a good understanding of the continuum of authentic assessment which will have guided the development of a portfolio, it is not unreasonable to assume that a good measure of reliability

between different teacher examiners could be achieved.

Parents are important partners of the school in the education received by their children. They could be asked to help their children select the pieces of work which could be included in their portfolio. This presumes that parents comprehend the instructional designs and their purposes, and have been fully apprised of, and have largely accepted, the nature of portfolio assessment. Further, they perceive the values to be derived by students and parents from employing such an approach to assessment in conjunction with the continuum of authentic assessment.

Portfolio assessment as a means to achieve a more authentic evaluation of learning needs to have administrative support. Teachers need to be involved from the very start if administrators plan to implement such an assessment strategy. And, above all, they need to know that they have a wide measure of latitude concerning decisions about the contents, analysis and evaluation of the contents of portfolios. This means that students need to have a hand in deciding what the contents of a portfolio will be.

How to handle the contents of a portfolio at the end of a school year can be a problem. Two alternatives suggest themselves. One, permit students to take their portfolios home with them. Two, select from the contents of the portfolios some items which would be retained by the school in a safe place. Such items might prove to be valuable should questions about a student's mastery or performance arise in the future. The remainder of the items would be sent home with the student.

Finally, it should be pointed out that no conclusive scientific evidence has emerged to suggest that portfolios are an effective means to improve learning, or a better alternative than standardized testing, for assessing the quality of learning and mastery achieved by students. (De Fina, 65)

Nonetheless, it can be argued, as this writer would, that any standardized testing reveals only the final product of what has been acquired by a learner, not the process which has been employed in achieving that product. This is no small matter.

Summary

In this paper I have described three classroom instructional designs, the nature of portfolios and the

assumptions upon which they are grounded, the meaning of 'authenticity' and the degree of authentic assessment which is likely to emerge from these designs, the way in which portfolios can be used in conjunction with a *continuum of authentic assessment* to assess learners when guided by these designs, and some of the problems that can arise when teachers who are guided by each of these instructional designs use portfolio assessment to evaluate their students.

The use of portfolios to assess the learning of children and youth would make teaching a far more participative process. Their use would bring into sustained, sharp focus the question of the purpose of any school. Should the school focus on facts, conventions, formulas, as constants, as the 'products' of schooling to be measured? Or should the school place a larger stress on the methods, the procedures, the 'process' which students use in pursuing their learning? It is the hundred-year old dilemma, which Dewey clearly articulated as he tested his New Education in the University Elementary School (commonly referred to as the Laboratory School) at the University of Chicago: shall the 'logical' (content) or the 'psychological'

(process) be the principle which governs and drives the teaching and learning of our students (Dewey, 1962)?

REFERENCES

Adler, M. J. (1982). The paideia proposal: An educational manifesto. 22 ff.

Bauer, N. (1989, April). "Physical models of schooling, the 'ought' question and educational change." Washington, D.C.: Resources in Education. ED 311 582.

Calahan, R. (1962). Education and the cult of efficiency. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 46-64.

De Fina, A. A. (1992). Portfolio assessment: Getting started. New York: Scholastic. 13-16.

Dewey, J. (1962,1902). The child and the curriculum. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 26-27.

Kneller, G. (1984). Movements of thought in modern education. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company. 35.

Kohanski, A. S. (1975). An analytical interpretation of Martin Buber's 'I and Thou'.

Ringler, L. (1992, May). "Foreword." In: A. A. DeFina. Portfolio assessment: Getting started. New York: Scholastic. 9.

Sizer, T. (1992). Horace's school: Redesigning the American high school. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 73.

Sulzby, E. (1990, April). "Qualities of a school district culture that support a dynamic process of assessment." In: J. A. Roderick (Ed.), Context-responsive approaches to assessing children's language. Urbana, IL: National Conference on Research in English. 97-104.